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WILLIAM MITTEN.

A Sketch with Bibliography.

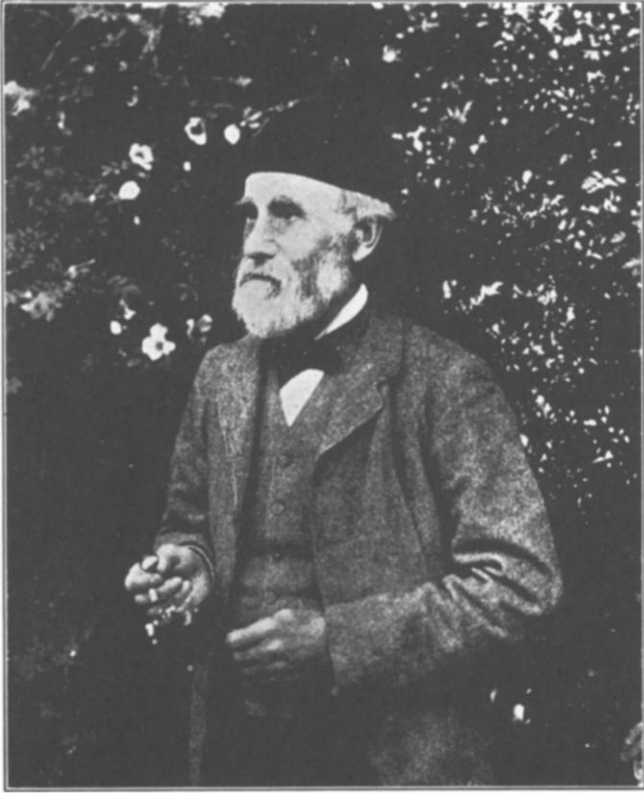
WILLIAM EDWARD NICHOLSON.

The bryological world is the poorer to-day by the loss of the veteran bryologist, William Mitten. Born at Hurstpierpoint, in the County of Sussex, the 30th November, 1819, he was in his 87th year when he passed away on the 20th July last.

By profession a pharmaceutical chemist, he was in early life apprenticed at Lewes in the same county to a chemist of the name of Saxby, who carried on business at a shop which has long since disappeared. He soon evinced a strong taste for various branches of natural history, and a story is still current in the town that, somewhat to his master's annoyance, those numerous pigeon holes, so general in a chemist's shop, with the mysterious labels Rh. Zingit, etc., etc., were frequently found to harbor "specimens" by no means corresponding to the label outside.

A fortunate acquaintance in early life with William Borrer, a well-known Sussex botanist, and Sir William Hooker caused him to turn his attention to the study of mosses and hepatics, and as early as May, 1843, he recorded the discovery from near Erith of *Aulacomnium androgynum* Schwgr. in fruit, a very rare condition in Europe, while in 1846 he discovered near Hurstpierpoint the rare and interesting *Weisia* (*Astomum*) *Mittenii*, which was named after him, and soon afterwards described by the authors of the *Bryologia Europea*, then in course of publication. Shortly after this Mitten turned his attention to the study of exotic mosses and hepatics, and in 1851 he published, in Hooker's *Journal of Botany*, "a Catalogue of cryptogamic plants, collected by W. Jameson in the vicinity of Quito." From this time, until a few years before his death, his work on exotic bryology was continuous, as will be seen from the subjoined list of his principal publications, and during this period most of the collections of mosses and hepatics received at Kew passed through his hands for determination. I regret my inability to discuss Mitten's work on exotic bryology, as I have not had the leisure or opportunity for studying mosses over a wide field. A general review of his work by a more competent pen would be most useful.

Mitten was on the side of the "splitters" rather than of the "lumpers," but in dealing with a group where there was so much new ground to be covered, such an attitude is in many ways justifiable, and it may reasonably be left to a later generation to take a more synthetic view. In any event, Mitten was fully aware that much yet remained to be done in this direction. Shortly before his death he told me that he had been looking through his North American *Brachythecia* with, I believe, a view to their revision, though I am not aware that this group particularly needs reduction or that Mitten's project took any definite shape.



WILLIAM MITTEN

1819 -- 1906

PLATE I.—Reproduced by permission of James Britten, K. S. G., F. L. S.
from the *Journal of Botany*, October, 1906.

The demands of his business and the *res angusta domi* rarely allowed Mitten to leave his home, and in these days of constant traveling it is strange to read of one who, as Mr. W. B. Hemsley informs us, told Sir William Hooker in 1854, had only been away from home for two week-days for five years. When his daughter Flora, in later years, relieved him of some of his business, he had more leisure, and on one occasion he made a visit to Switzerland, of which he cherished very pleasant recollections, and in the course of which he gathered many things previously only known to him in herbarium specimens. He told me of the particular interest which he had found in visiting the district, in which Schleicher had botanized.

It was not until late in the autumn of his long life that I had the privilege of a personal acquaintance with Mitten. My first letters from him, dated in the early part of the year 1895, are in reference to *Pottia caespitosa* and other rare Sussex mosses which he most kindly directed me to find. His letters are models of that painstaking accuracy which, I believe, characterized his work generally, and they were also full of encouragement to me, who was little more than a beginner at the time, as he concluded his first letter with the remark: "I shall always be glad to hear of any new or strange moss you may meet with, and hope you may find as much to interest you in mosses as I have for so many years." The implied promise of assistance was amply redeemed in our subsequent correspondence.

My opportunities of seeing Mitten were few and far between, but it was always a pleasure to look in and see him in his quiet home, surrounded by his garden in which he took so much interest, and which harbored many rare and curious plants. On the last occasion on which I saw him he was regretting the wild luxuriance of several rare British plants which had spread beyond all bounds and which, as he observed, wanted all the place to themselves. On another occasion, in 1903, I had the pleasure of showing him fresh specimens of *Weisia Mittenii*, which I had recently found and in which he was much interested, as it had not, I believe, been gathered since his original discovery of it in 1846.

Mitten was an associate of the Linnean Society of London, to which he was elected in 1847, an honorary member of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, and of the New Zealand Institute, and also of the Brighton Natural History Society, and the South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies.

Mittenia Gottsche was a genus of hepaticae allied to *Pallavicinia* (Ann. Sci. Nat. Ser. 5, I. 1862), and Lindberg in 1863 put forward the genus *Mittenia* of mosses as a substitute for *Mniopsis* already in use.

There is an excellent portrait of Mitten in the October number of the Journal of Botany, accompanying an interesting notice of him by Mr. W. Botting Hemsley, from which I have borrowed a few details. I am also indebted to his daughter, Miss Flora Mitten, for assistance in compiling these notes, and to Mr. A. Gepp, of the British Museum, for a greater part of the subjoined list of Mittens' publications, mostly taken from the Royal Society's catalogue. Mitten leaves a widow who is 93 years of age, three unmarried daughters, and a fourth who is the wife of the famous naturalist

Dr. A. R. Wallace, co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of Natural Selection.

The following is a list of the principal publications of William Mitten on bryology. His most important work is No. 31, on the Mosses of South America, which occupies the whole of the twelfth volume of the Journal of the Linnean Society:

1. Some remarks on Mosses, with a proposed new arrangement of the genera. *Ann. Nat. Hist.* VIII, 1851, pp. 51-59.
2. A list of all the Mosses and Hepaticae hitherto observed in Sussex. *Ann. Nat. Hist.* VIII, 1851, pp. 305-324, 362-370.
3. Catalogue of cryptogamic plants collected by W. Jameson in the vicinity of Quito. *Hook., Journ. Bot.* III, 1851, pp. 49-57, 351-361.
4. [Musci and Hepaticae in] Dr. F. Weluritsch's Some Notes upon the cryptogamic portion of the plants collected in Portugal, 1842-1850; London, 1853, pp. 14-24.
5. [Hepaticae in] J. D. Hooker's *Flora Novae-Zelandiae*, II, 1855, pp. 125-172.
6. On some undescribed species of Musci belonging to the genera *Mnium* and *Bryum*. *Hook., Journ. Bot.* VIII, 1856, pp. 230-233.
7. A list of the Musci and Hepaticae collected in Victoria, Australia, by Dr. F. Müller. *Hook., Journ. Bot.* VIII, 1856, pp. 257-266.
8. A list of some Mosses and Hepaticae collected by the Rev. Charles Parish at Moulmein. *Hook., Journ. Bot.* VIII, 1856, pp. 353-357.
9. Enumeration of the Mosses collected in India by Dr. J. D. Hooker and Dr. T. Thomson, with their habitats, elevations, and the numbers under which they have been distributed (written in collaboration with W. Wilson). *Hook., Journ. Bot.* IX, 1857, pp. 289-300, 321-333, 363-370.
10. [Hepaticae of Panama in] B. Seemann's, *The Botany of the Voyage of H. M. S. Herald*, 1845-1851; London, 1852-1857, pp. 245-6.
11. A few notes on some new or rare British Mosses. *Phytologist*, II, 1857-1858, pp. 177-180.
12. *Musci Indiae Orientalis*: an enumeration of the Mosses of the East Indies (1858). *Linn. Soc. Journ.* III, 1859 (Bot.) Suppl.
13. [Hepaticae in] J. D. Hooker's *Flora Tasmaniae* II, 1860, pp. 221-241.
14. Descriptions of some new species of Musci from New Zealand and other parts of the southern hemisphere, together with an enumeration of the species collected in Tasmania by William Archer, arranged upon the plan proposed in the *Musci Indiae Orientalis* (1859). *Linn. Soc. Journ.* IV, 1860 (Bot.) pp. 64-100.
15. *Musci et Hepaticae Vitienses*. *Bonplandia*, IX, 1861, pp. 365-367; X, 1862, pp. 19-20.
16. *Hepaticae Indiae Orientalis* (1860) *Linn. Soc. Trans.* V, 1861, (Bot.) pp. 89-128.
17. On some new species of Musci and Hepaticae in the Herbarium of Sir W. J. Hooker, collected in tropical Africa, chiefly by the late Dr. Vogel and Mr. Barter (1860). *Linn. Soc. Trans.* XXIII, 1862, pp. 51-58.

18. Contributions to the Lichenographia of New Zealand; being an account with figures of some new species of Graphideae and allied Lichens (1860). Linn. Soc. Trans. XXIII, 1862, pp. 101-106 (in collaboration with Charles Knight).
19. On the Musci and Hepaticae from the Cameroons Mountains and from River Niger. Linn. Soc. Journ. VII, 1863, (Bot.) pp. 147-169.
20. Hypnum abietinum. Linn. Seemann, Journ. Bot. I. 1863, pp. 356-357.
21. On Anisostichium, a proposed new genus of Musci. Linn. Soc. Journ. VII, 1863, (Bot.) pp. 119-120.
22. A new genus of Hepaticae. Journ. Linn. Soc. VII, (1864). pp. 243-244.
23. Some observations on the Moss known to British bryologists as Hypnum pratense. Journ. of Bot. II, 1864, pp. 122-123.
24. Descriptions of New British Mosses: Hypnum imponens, Funaria microstoma, Seligeria calcicola, S. calcarea, S. pusilla. Journ. of Bot. II, 1864, pp. 193-196.
25. Contributions to cryptogamic flora of the Atlantic Islands (1863). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) VIII, 1865, pp. 1-10.
26. The Bryologia of the Survey of 49th parallel of latitude (1864). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) VIII, 1865, pp. 12-55.
27. On some new species of Musci and Hepaticae, additional to the floras of Japan and the coast of China (1864). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) VIII, 1865, pp. 148-158.
28. A few notes on some British mosses allied to Tortula fallax Hedw. Journ. of Bot. V, 1867, pp. 324-329.
29. New or rare British Mosses: Trichostomum flavovirens, T. diffractum, T. littorale. Journ. of Bot. VI, 1868, pp. 97-99.
30. A list of the Musci collected by the Rev. Thomas Powell in the Samoa or Navigators' Islands (1867). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) 1869, pp. 166-195.
31. Musci Austro-Americani, sive enumeratio muscorum omnium Austro-Americanorum mihi hucusque cognitorum, eorum praecipue in terris Amazonicis Andinisque a Ricardo Spruceo lectorum (1868). Linn. Soc. Journ. Bot. XII, 1869, pp. 1-632.
32. [Musci, Hepaticae in] F. Du Cane Godman's Natural History of the Azores. London, 1870, pp. 288-328.
33. Observations on the species of Pottia allied to P. truncata, with descriptions of three new species: P. littoralis, P. asperula, P. viridifolia. Journ. of Bot. IX, 1871, pp. 2-5.
34. Descriptions of new species of Musci collected in Ceylon by Dr. Thwaites (1872). Linn. Soc. Journ. XIII, 1873 (Bot.), pp. 293-326.
35. [Muscineae in] B. Seemann's Flora Vitiensis. London, 1873, pp. 378-419.
36. On the Aloina section of the genus Tortula. Journ. of Bot. 3, 1874, pp. 139-142.
37. [Mosses of the Island of St. Paul] (1874). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) 14, 1875, pp. 480-482.
38. [Muscineae in] J. C. Melliss's St. Helena, 1875, pp. 357-374.

39. The Musci and Hepaticae collected by H. N. Mosley, Naturalist to H. M. S. Challenger (1875). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) 15, 1877, pp. 59-73.
40. List of the Musci and Hepaticae collected in Kerguelen's Island by the Rev. A. E. Eaton (1876). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) 15, 1877, pp. 193-197.
41. List of Hepaticae collected by the Rev. A. E. Eaton at the Cape of Good Hope (August and September, 1874,) (1877). Linn. Soc. Journ. (Bot.) 16, 1878, pp. 187-196.
42. [Mosses and Juugermanniae in] Sir G. S. Nares's Narration of a Voyage to the Polar Sea, during 1875-1876; 2d. Edit. Vol. II, appendix, No. 14, London, 1878, pp. 313-319.
43. [Musci Maroccani in] J. Ball's Spicilegium Florae Maroccae (1877). Journ. Linn. Soc. (Bot.) XVI, 1878, pp. 737-739.
44. [Transit of Venus Expeditions, 1874-1875.] Enumeration of the plants hitherto collected in Kerguelen Island, etc. II, Musci, III, Hepaticae. Phil. Trans., 168 (Extra Vol.) 1879, pp. 24-45.
45. [Transit of Venus Expeditions, 1874-1875. Collections from Rodriguez]. Musci, Hepaticae. Phil. Trans. 168 (Extra Vol.) 1879, pp. 388-401.
46. Record of new localities of Polynesian Mosses, with descriptions of some hitherto undefined species (1882), New South Wales. Linn. Soc. Proc., 7, 1883, pp. 98-104.
47. [Muscineae in] Mason and Theobald's Burma, its people and productions, Vol. II, Hertford, 1883, pp. 36-55.
48. Australian Mosses. Trans. and Proc. Roy. Soc. Victoria, XIX, 1883, pp. 49-96.
49. [Muscineae in] W. B. Hemsley's Report on Botany of H. M. S. Challenger. I, 1885, pp. 88-93, et passim.
50. Notes on the European and North American species of mosses of the genus Fissidens (1885), Journ. Linn. Soc. (Bot.) XXI, 1886, pp. 550-560.
51. Some new species of the genus Metzgeria (1886). Journ. Linn. Soc. (Bot.) XXII, 1887, pp. 241-243.
52. The Mosses and Hepaticae collected in Central Africa by the late Right Rev. James Hannington, Bishop of Mombasa, F.L.S., F.G.S., etc., with some others, including those gathered by Mr. H. H. Johnston on Kilimanjaro (1886). Journ. Linn. Soc. (Bot.) XXII, (1887) pp. 298-329.
53. [Musci in] W. B. Hemsley's Report on the Vegetation of Diego Garcia (1886). Journ. Linn. Soc. (Bot.) XXII (1887), pp. 339-340.
54. Musci of Roraina Expedition of 1884. Trans. Linn. Soc. II, pp. 296-297, 1887.
55. [Muscineae in] J. B. Balfour's Botany of Socotra, in Trans. Roy. Soc. Edinburgh, Vol. XXXI, 1887, pp. 330-336.
56. An Enumeration of all the species of Musci and Hepaticae recorded from Japan (1889) Trans. Linn. Soc. London (Bot.), III, 1890, pp. 153-206.
57. [Muscineae in] Dr. O. Stapf's, On the Flora of Mount Kinabalu, in North Bornea (1903) in Trans. Linn. Soc. London (Bot.) IV. 1903, pp. 255-261 (in conjunction with C. H. Wright).

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